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Labor Celebrates Obama Victory

A Sizemore-backed 'dues check-off' measure a nail-biter

Across the country on election night, organized labor celebrated the election of Democrat Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States. Obama is the first African-American in history to hold the office. In a landslide victory, Obama, a U.S. senator from Illinois, outpolled Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona 53 percent to 46 percent, and captured 349 electoral votes to McCain's 173.

Democrats looked to have picked up five seats in the U.S. Senate, with three races still undecided, and 19 seats in the U.S. House, with nine still undetermined. That, and Obama in the White House, increases the likelihood that the union movement will be able to pass its landmark labor law reform, the Employee Free Choice Act.

In Oregon it was by and large a night of labor movement victories. State Sen. Kurt Schrader walloped Republican Mike Erickson to fill an open seat in the 5th District. Labor-backed



Kathy Blay, Courtney Fisher, Jerry Fisher and Lisa Fisher cheer as they listen to Barack Obama's victory speech on a big screen TV at the Oregon Convention Center. Jerry Fisher is a field rep for Glazers Local 740.

Democrats also carried the day in statewide races, with Kate Brown elected secretary of state; John Kroger tapped for attorney general; Ben Westlund capturing state treasurer; and Brad Avakian elected labor commissioner, a non-partisan office.

But the state's biggest campaign was still too close to call as of press time Wednesday morning. The state's unions were heavily involved in working to elect House Speaker Jeff Merkley and unseat two-term Republican U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith.

Democrats padded their majority in the U.S. House, going from 233 Democrats and 202 Republicans to at least 258 Democrats.

Schrader will join Democratic incumbents David Wu, Earl Blumenaier, and Peter DeFazio of Oregon, and Brian Baird of Southwest Washington, all of whom were easily re-elected. Republican Greg Walden, who had some labor endorsements, was re-elected in Oregon's 2nd Dis-

trict.

In Washington State, incumbent Democratic Gov. Chris Gregoire defeated Dino Rossi with strong labor support. The count at press time was 54 percent to 46 percent.

All of the ballot measures backed by labor foes Bill Sizemore and Kevin Mannix went down to defeat — except one, Ballot Measure 64, a confusingly worded measure intended to halt public employee unions involvement in politics, which was too close to call at press time. That had union leaders worried. The measure would ban employer collection of union dues if the union spends any money on politics, however defined.

"It could shut my local down," said Richard Beetle, business manager of Laborers Local 483, which represents parks, road maintenance and water bureau workers at the City of Portland. Beetle thinks Measure 64 is intended to lay the foundation for a "right-to-

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Machinists solidarity leads to new contract at Boeing

Machinists at The Boeing Co. ratified a new four-year contract Nov. 1, ending a strike that began Sept. 6.

The pact, which covers 27,000 employees in Washington, Oregon, Kansas, and California, passed by a 74 percent margin.

The agreement was hammered out over a five-day period beginning Oct. 23, with assistance from federal mediators and participation at the bargaining table by IAM International President Tom Buffenbarger and IAM General Vice President Rich Michalski.

"I'm extremely proud of our membership," said Bob Petroff, directing business representative of Portland-based District Lodge 24, and a member of the bargaining team. "This excellent contract didn't just happen by accident. It is the result of tremendous solidarity by the membership, and support from other unions and



from the community." Local Lodge 63 represents 1,244 workers at the Boeing parts plant in Gresham.

Job security and the use of vendors were key issues in the strike. The union was able to secure over 5,000 jobs and provide security for the entire workforce by stopping Boeing from chipping away at jobs. If the company had expanded its plan, ultimately all jobs would have been at risk.

Among the other issues resolved were wage rates, health care benefits

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Daimler says 'bye, bye' to making Freightliner trucks in Portland

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

The long-feared news came Oct. 14. A truck-making operation that employed generations of Portlanders will close in June 2010, as part of a major restructuring of Daimler Trucks North America.

Over 900 manufacturing workers will lose good-paying jobs at the company's plant in Portland's Swan Island Industrial Park. The plant once made all Freightliner trucks, but since 2000, the work has migrated in stages to plants in Mexico and North and South Carolina. Currently, the Swan Island plant makes just Western Star trucks and Freightliner military vehicles. Daimler, which owns those truck

brands and several others, will move the military production to one of its manufacturing facilities in the Carolinas, and the Western Star production to its plant in Santiago Tianguistenco, Mexico.

Daimler Trucks North America headquarters will continue on in Portland for now, the company says. The sales, marketing, and customer support work was relocated to Fort Mill, South Carolina, last year. But about 2,200 nonunion workers are still employed in administration, product development, procurement, and information technology in Portland.

For the union workers, it's a 20-month countdown to an uncertain future. Workers to be terminated include

members of Machinists Lodge 1005, Sign Painters and Paint Makers Local 1094, Teamsters Local 305, and Service Employees Local 49.

Machinists Lodge 1005 is the largest group, with 680 members at the plant. Several contracts ago, Local 1005 fought to get a "no-plant-closure" commitment in the contract, and that's why the closure is so far out — June 2010 is when the current union contract expires.

That contract also requires the company to bargain a severance package: The two sides will begin negotiating early next year. Some workers may want to get a head start and find other work before the plant closes. But if the

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